AIR POUCH
PRIORITY

UNCLASSIFIED
(Security Classification)

91

FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

714.00(W)/2-2053
790001-1334

FROM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA 724
DESP NO.

TO THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON. February 20, 1953
DATE

REF

FEB 20 1953

Action Taken

No. 2 For Dept. Use Only	ACTION	DEPT.
	CLI	ARA I IBS IFI TCA RE IPS IIAA
	RECD FEB 21	INFO OTHER ARMY NAVY AIR OSD CIA

2-24-53

SUBJECT: Joint Weeka No. 8 for State, Army and Air Departments from SAA - Section I.

SUMMARY

Guatemala this week returned to a surface calm following last week's disturbances caused by the removal of all but one of the Supreme Court Justices by Congress. There were a series of protests but organized opposition failed to crystallize. Yet beneath the surface the atmosphere remained one of uneasiness and sharpened suspicion of the ARBENZ Administration. An indication of this was a rumor that the Cabinet had decided to expel Msgr. Mariano ROSSELL y Arellano, Archbishop of Guatemala, which led to a spontaneous demonstration in his behalf. In rural areas, further clashes occurred over agrarian reform and resulted in several deaths from machete wounds. The Arbenz Administration showed increased awareness of its bad press abroad and on February 16 Sr. Augusto CHARNAUD MacDonald, Minister of Interior, summoned foreign correspondents and representatives of the local opposition press and warned them that though Guatemala intended to maintain freedom of expression it would use every legal means to check the dissemination of "calumnies, insults and falsehoods".

DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

The past week saw continued expressions of disapproval of the action of the Administration-controlled Congress in removing all but one of the Supreme Court Justices on February 6 but no effective opposition (Weeka No. 7). The Bar Association passed a resolution condemning this "unconstitutional" act but the lawyers suspended their brief strike. A "University League for the Defense of the Constitution" was formed by local students and attorneys but quickly voted against a strike, choosing instead to send a special appeal to the President and Congress to repeal the decree that removed the Justices. The larger Departments of the University failed to join the law students in their strike.

Despite continued failure of organized opposition to crystallize, a strong undercurrent of unrest and suspicion of

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
MAY 11 1953
FILED

JCHill:rd
2/20/53 TER

UNCLASSIFIED

ACTION COPY — DEPARTMENT OF STATE
MESSAGE CENTER

The action office must return this permanent record copy to DC/R with an endorsement of action taken.

PER CE MEMO OFFICE AAA
FADRC FOI CASE NO. 740332

714.00(W)/2-2053 LWC

Central Files

Must Be Returned To

UNCLASSIFIED
1790004-1335

the Government remained. Symptomatic of th' was a rumor that the Cabinet had decided to expel Msgr. Mariano Rossell y Arellano, Archbishop of Guatemala, from the country, which gained such currency that several hundred persons gathered in front of his palace to pledge their support. Dr. Raúl OSEGUEDA, Foreign Minister, and Augusto Charnaud MacDonald, Minister of Interior branded the rumor as "totally false" and blamed it on the Opposition.

In the provinces acts of violence continued to arise over the application of the Agrarian Reform Law (Weeka No. 6). The press reported further instances of farm laborers taking the law into their own hands by invading private property and staking out plots without the authority of the National Agrarian Department. In the village of San Pedro Ayampuc, Department of Guatemala, quarrels about the agrarian reform compounded by older local and personal feuds resulted in a clash in which one man was killed and ten others suffered machete wounds. A similar disorder reported in the village of San Vicente Pacaya in the same Department resulted in two killed and two wounded. The independent press carried pictures showing mutilated individuals and editorialized against the danger of stirring up the Indian farm labor. Thus far such incidents have been local in scale and sporadic.

On February 16 the Government showed increased sensitivity to its bad press abroad when Charnaud MacDonald, Minister of Interior, summoned foreign correspondents and representatives of the local independent press and in a written statement warned them that Guatemala intended to maintain freedom of expression but would use every legal means to check the dissemination of "calumnies, insults and falsehoods". The statement said that certain foreign correspondents had sent out totally false reports and had systematically obstructed the Government's policy of maintaining friendly relations with other nations and preserving internal order. At the conference Charnaud MacDonald exhibited as examples of distorted reporting copies of correspondents' cables on the removal of the Supreme Court Justices and ensuing demonstrations.

On February 13 the Government newspaper Diario de Centro América devoted a half page to articles by Víctor Manuel GUTIERREZ, Communist Secretary General of the CGTG, Dr. Jorge Luis ARRIOLA, Minister of Health, and others on the importance of the "National Youth Conference" scheduled to be held in Guatemala City beginning February 20. The conference is being organized as one of the world-wide national youth conferences promoted by the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) and supported by the International Students' Union and World Federation of Trade Unions, all well-known international Communist organizations.

UNCLASSIFIED

Dep. No. 724
From Guatemala

UNCLASSIFIED
(Classification)

End. No.
Dep. No.
From

FOREIGN RELATIONS

F790001-1336

Illustrating the mutually suspicious relations prevailing between El Salvador and Guatemala, the local press on February 14 published interviews with Guillermo BONILLA and Adolfo Raúl IGLESIAS, two young Guatemalans who claimed to have been falsely accused by the Salvadoran police of complicity in a planned attempt to assassinate the Salvadoran Foreign Minister, Roberto CANESSA, to have been held and tortured in a Salvadoran jail for a month, and finally to have been deported to Guatemala after the Salvadoran authorities had taken the truck in which they had been proceeding to Venezuela to look for work. (El Salvador Weeka No. 5). They denied all knowledge of the reported plot. The Guatemalan Foreign Office announced that it was asking the Guatemalan Embassy in El Salvador to investigate the case.

MILITARY

The Government's Diario de Centro América ridiculed the charges made in the United States by General Rafael Leonidas TRUJILLO of the Dominican Republic that the "Caribbean Legion" in Guatemala was preparing to participate in revolutions in Cuba and Venezuela. The paper said that the Legion has been and continues to be the nightmare of the General but that it was a fiction. The latest reports available to the Embassy indicate that the Legion at present is, in fact, largely disbanded and is not in a training status.

Rudolf E. Schoenfeld

Contributor:
Colonel A. E. McCormick, Army Attaché

Copies: Other C.A. Missions, and routine

UNCLASSIFIED